

THE SEARCH FOR ORTHODOXY A.D. 325–553



by Ramsay MacMullen

Christendom's earliest attempts at theological unity, over the period A.D. 325–553, brought not union, as was always so clearly intended, but disunion, with permanent effects. The outcome is unexpected especially if one looks at the very beginning, in the Nicene Council (325). Christians, confronting a serious challenge to their unity of belief, then and there discovered themselves to be tolerably at one—just tolerably. Their further attempts, however, to arrive at a more perfectly understood agreement only broke them into a half-dozen pieces, intolerably divided. These were the Arian and Roman Catholic Churches in the western Roman empire, and in the eastern, the Greek Orthodox, the East Syrian, the Syrian Orthodox, and the Coptic Orthodox.

From the choice of focus in successive large or general church assemblies, it is clear that theology and more particularly Christology was seen as profoundly important—more so than liturgy, discipline, or even the ranking of one great bishopric above another. It is equally clear that proponents of one or another definition of the Trinity set an enormous value on the universal acceptance of whatever they proposed, which they called “right-thought,” *orthodoxia*. Orthodoxy was often claimed by one party in the face and presence of its adversary, each asserting its own cause while cursing (that is, anathematizing) the other.

Great as was Rome's authority in the West, treated with deference in Constantinople and, especially in the sixth century, invited to speak out on dogma, still, its weight was little exerted in the East. As a pope is reminded in the fifth Ecumenical council, “in the [earlier] four holy councils no great number of western bishops can ever be found, but rather, just two or three bishops or some lower clergy.”¹ It is clear from the very lexicon of the dispute that the center of debate lay in the eastern, Greek-speaking provinces: hence the word *orthodoxia* itself, but also *heterodoxy*, *heresy*, *ecclesiastical synod*, *ecumenical*, and *catholic*, to say nothing of the technical terms of Christological analysis. Of these, more later.

Despite the Greek and eastern origins and center of the orthodoxical story, it is convenient to look first at the empire's European provinces north and west of Italy. Here throughout the period here studied a majority of the population held fast to their traditional faith, polytheist; but among the Christians a significant minority, during most decades, were Arian. The determination of belief lay generally with the sword; that is, kings or emperors and their laws and threats of force, or sometimes their deposition of bishops and seizing of church rights and properties, brought a town into one

¹ A reminder of A.D. 553 to Vigilius in *Sacrorum conciliorum nova, et amplissima collectio*, ed. G. D. Mansi (henceforth Mansi) (Florence 1759–1798) 9.195C.

allegiance or another. Even much of Italy was Arian for much of the period; so were the north African provinces.² Both sides insisted they were right, sometimes getting along with each other quite peacefully, sometimes persecuting each other cruelly.

The Arians owed their theology to the great Ulfilas (d. 383), missionary among the peoples living to the north of the empire. By chance, he was Arian. His converts in their time, as mercenaries, hired out to the emperors to augment the Roman armies. Thus in 376, a century before the “dramatic” date of the collapse of the West, enough Goths and other tribes had entered to make good a claim on large parts of the interior as their home. They continued to flow in over the next generation or two, not as mercenaries but as invaders; and it was these generations that accounted for the presence in the Christian population of two allegiances in Spain, France, Italy, and so forth. Their kings, to the extent they chose to exert their power in religious affairs, determined who was bishop, as bishops determined what creed would be taught. The conversion of one of the barbarian rulers, Clovis, to the Nicene faith was seen as a turn in history, since his subjects could be assumed to accept whatever he declared was true doctrine; and he in his turn acknowledged the authority of the Roman bishop. His would then be a Roman Catholic church, over-all, meaning a religious population with a clear structure of authority, not just loosely shared opinions; and confronting them, the Arians similarly.

Arian origins take us back to the east and to a transition described for us by a professor in Egypt, a bishop at the end (a certain Alexander), who was in a perfect position to understand religious-historical developments near the close of the third century—just the generation in which Arius himself took his rise.³ We are told (and other near-contemporary sources confirm for us),

The philosophy of the Christians is simple. It devotes most of its efforts to ethical instruction, and regarding the more rigorous discussions of God it uses metaphorical language. In ethics also they avoid the more difficult questions ... They devote themselves principally to moral exhortation ... piling up their rather crude injunctions hit or miss. Ordinary folk who hear this as one can see for one's self make great progress in virtue. But this philosophy has been much fragmented by its subsequent adherents; many schools of thought have emerged just as in academic philosophizing, with the result that some of these men developed beyond others in their skills and, so to speak, in their more vigorous inquiries. Indeed, some have risen to leadership of schools of thought, *haireseis*, and thus ethical instruction has declined as it has become less clear—since none of those who wanted to head up schools of thought were able to attain the necessary rigor and since the common people became more disposed to factious strife. So, as each was eager to surpass his predecessors through the novelty of his teachings, they converted this simple philosophy into an inextricable tangle.

Egypt, meaning Alexandria, provided a home for Greek learning far outranking Ath-

² On the non-Christian proportion, R. MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven 1997) 67ff.; on Arian proportions in the west, L. Pietri, ed., *Histoire du christianisme des origines à nos jours 3: Les églises d'Orient et d'Occident* (Paris 1998) 199, 206ff., 233ff., 279, 316f., 352, 358, and elsewhere; *Cambridge Ancient History*, ed. 3 (Cambridge 2000) 14.114, 118, 125f., 360, 447ff., 530, 549, and elsewhere; and B. Luiselli, “Dall’arianesimo dei Visigoti di Costantinopoli all’arianesimo degli Ostrogoti d’Italia,” *Rendiconti dell’Accademia degli Lincei*, series 9, 16 (2005) 6f., 11f., and elsewhere (Eng. summary plus bibliography).

³ Alexander of Lycopolis, *Contra Manichaeos* 1f., with similar reports in R. MacMullen, *Voting About God in Early Church Councils* (New Haven 2006) 25f.

ens. Its pride was the empire's largest city with the most remarkable facilities for study of every sort. Just here if anywhere one would expect the attractions of abstract thought, long felt in Christian circles, to lead into questions almost too hard to answer. These, it was Arius's fate or fortune to pose to his own congregation, to his students, and the general church of Alexandria. The years of his rise were the teens of the fourth century.

He was no light-minded exhibitionist; rather, mature, earnest, ascetical and eloquent, an elder in charge of a suburban parish who enjoyed his superior's confidence. Yet he challenged his bishop by talking too much and too long about theological matters open to disagreement and troubling to his listeners. Worse, he insisted on his ideas, to the point of packaging them in ways to make them widely accessible, in verse form as well as prose tracts, and in songs set to popular tunes which circulated among the people of the streets and harbor. He did nothing to prevent the formation of break-away congregations in the city's churches that accepted his teachings; and riots disturbed their relations with others who listened instead to the bishop.

About 321 the rift had grown to a size and seriousness that required a provincial church council to be called, and Arius was driven out. But not driven underground. On the contrary, the sees to the north with whom he had been in friendly correspondence received and supported him in their own provincial councils, not only in Palestine and Syria but as far north as Nicomedia near the Bosphorus. There, we are told, the bishop "was especially powerful at this time because that was where the emperor was resident" (Socrates, *Eccl. Hist.* 1.6.33). The bishop of Alexandria, however, was infuriated by what amounted to attacks on his authority from the outside. He wrote a long, angry letter to scores of sees for publication among them, thus embroiling much of the eastern empire. The bishop of Nicomedia replied in kind; and it was at this point (324) that Constantine was invited to intervene, and saw fit to do so.⁴

A half-century earlier the Christian community of Antioch had taken its troubles to the emperor. He made and enforced a settlement between them and their former bishop. Again in the second decade of the fourth century, the churches of North Africa appealed to the emperor Constantine; and he set up a structure to adjudicate between the opposing parties. Thus the decision taken in 324 had nothing novel about it; rather, the realities induced it; for, apart from the emperor, who was great enough to stand above and settle a dispute among Alexandria, Nicomedia, and other cities of size and honor?

The dispute was certainly not seen by the people actually engaged in it as all theory or captious cleverness. Constantine, however, could not take it seriously, at least to begin with. He rebuked Arius's bishop for inviting his presbyters' comments on "a certain Bible passage, or I should say, regarding an idle speculation therein ... It was not proper at the outset to inquire about such matters nor, once asked for, was it proper to respond in an investigation of such a sort where there is no legal necessity but only the chatter of unproductive idleness to occasion it ... In such matters we should thus

⁴ R. Williams, *Arius. Heresy and Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI 2001) 45f., 56, and elsewhere; S. J. Davis, *Early Coptic Papacy* (Cairo 2004) 49ff.; on propagation of doctrine by songs, source-references gathered in R. MacMullen, *Changes in the Roman Empire* (Princeton 1990) 391.

say as little as possible where our natural inadequacies prove incapable to expound, or the dullness of mind among the people we teach may fall short” (quoted by Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 2.68.2f., PG 20.1041f., and Socrates, *Eccl. Hist.* 1.7f., PG 67.56Af.); and in this public form the emperor went on to trivialize the dispute.

His reaction to it should not be uncomprehendingly dismissed. Against the needlessness of it all—its excessive detail and subtlety, the philosophical double-talk and techno-speak of which it was accused—similar protests were made repeatedly by later emperors, in comment on later disputes; or by Jerome or Hilary, Gregory of Nyssa or Gregory of Nazianzus, the latter protesting at one point, “Let’s not quibble about the existence before Time of the Pneuma, the Holy Spirit.”⁵ The real issues at stake could be forgotten in the engagement over terminological differences, when politics and personalities took over; and it is not surprising to find modern commentators, besides and since Gibbon, declaring points of theological controversy, especially in the fifth and sixth centuries, too refined to explain the repercussions and often the bloodshed that resulted from them.⁶ Realities, however, as they presented themselves to a responsible ruler in 324, required him to act.

Some months later, then, in 325, some 200 bishops assembled at a small town auspiciously named Victorious, Nicaea, a morning’s ride south of Nicomedia and handy to the capital as well. They had been issued not only personal and individual invitations from the emperor but travel vouchers for the state’s transport system to make sure they got there. No doubt they took an imperial summons seriously (the Great Persecutions lay only a dozen years in the past).

In yet one more imperial palace, then, such as were to be found scattered in many cities, they met over a span of weeks, marked by explosions of disagreement but an ultimate determination by Constantine himself: in defining Christ, the statement of belief to be agreed on should employ the word “same-substance-y,” *homoousios*. It was Greek, of course, because that was the language of Nicaea as it was of all ecumenical councils in the period here reviewed and beyond, too; and for the few delegates from the western provinces (no bishops among them save Ossius, long an immigrant in the East), council minutes and other working documents could be easily translated. Arius himself and something less than twenty of the attendance held out against the proposed definition, but in the presence of the emperor and confronted by a paper to sign held out to them, one by one, by his highest official, these dissidents were in the end reduced to four. Nicaea’s proceedings were thus approved and subscribed to, while the hold-outs were excommunicated and sent into exile.

“We believe,” read the agreed statement, “in one God, the Father almighty, maker

⁵ Jerome and the Gregories in my *Voting* (n. 3 above) 26ff., 29; also Meletius, bishop of Antioch, protesting against deceptive terminological argument and unnecessary “quarrels over disputed matters and those, too high for us,” in Epiphanius, *Panarion* 73.33.1; or Hilary, *On the Councils* (*De synodis*) 11, PL 10.487f., advising, “Inasmuch as some or many were troubled about substance which in Greek is called *usia*—that is, to make it more explicit, *homoousion* or the term *homoeousion*—there ought to be no mention of these at all and no one should preach them ...” (Eng. trans. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* [London 1950] 285f.).

⁶ E. g., R. G. Roberson, *Eastern Christian Churches* (Rome 1988) 3: “Today it is generally agreed that the Christological differences between these [Eastern] churches and the Chalcedonian are only verbal”; or their “theological beliefs turned out to be surprisingly similar” in the conference of A.D. 532, according to W. Treadgold, *History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford 1997) 183.

of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance (*ousia*) of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, Who because of us men and because of our salvation came down and became incarnate, becoming man, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended to the heavens, and will come to judge the living and the dead; and in the Holy Spirit.”⁷ This was orthodoxy.

The phrases following the key word occasioned no dispute; rather, as added curses made clear in the further defining of the creed, it was the nature of the Trinity itself that had needed clarification once and for all. Arius was wrong to have insisted that Christ if a Son and begotten could not have existed from all time; that He must have undergone a change, that is, from not existing to existing, being therefore not perfect in an absolute sense; and so, in short, was different from and less than God the Father. This demeaning of Christ, as it was seen, had lain at the center of the storm raised in the eastern churches. God must of course be one, it was always agreed; but beyond that, all elements of God figuring in the Bible must share equally in His perfection—which must at the same time, in the person of Christ, be human and imperfect. Without that humanity, there could be no true intermediation and salvation. One divine being must then at the same time be two, in all ways equal; or they must rather be three, to include the Pneuma; and to one of the three must be attributed suffering and sin and fallibility and weakness of will, yet a nature simultaneously superior to all of these. To square the circle presented by these and similar questions, distinctions had to be drawn among several aspects or levels of human understanding regarding each member of the Trinity and among those of Christ in particular, across time, from begetting to crucifixion.

In the centuries that followed Nicaea, these difficulties were again and again insistently revisited, parsed and explained in different ways, beginning indeed with the very bishops who had signed at Nicaea. They deplored afterward in their letters to each other that they had not really understood what they were signing on to. At Antioch in 341 an important council considering theological questions could arrive at no consensus and ended by offering four creeds; in the one generation after Nicaea, no

⁷ Trans. Kelly 215f.; but note that he translates both *ousia* and *hypostasis* as “substance” (210, 215) and (223) that Eusebius the church historian equated the two in the Nicene creed, as did Athanasius; cf. W. A. Adeney, *Greek and Eastern Churches* (New York 1932) 74. J. Stevenson, *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*, 2nd ed. (London 1989) 82, 84, 88f., 306, prefers *ousia* = “essence” and *hypostasis* = “existence” or “person” (though also *prosopon* = “person”); and J. Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Division* (Crestwood, NY 1989) 233, prefers *ousia* = “essence” and *hypostasis* = “substance.” In Cyril, a key figure, *hypostasis* = “nature.” Cf. Meyendorff 192; F. Nau, “Documents pour servir à l’histoire de l’église nestorienne,” *Patrologia orientalis* 13 (1919) 198; or J. M. Hussey, *Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford 1986) 12, showing many of the Greek Orthodox pro-Chalcedonians equating “nature” also with *prosopon*; and Justinian with Cyril maintained the equivalence *physis* = “nature” = *hypostasis*; cf. B. J. Kidd, *Churches of Eastern Christendom* (London 1927) 44f. On suspicions of these new terms, see, e. g., Y.-M. Duval, “La ‘manoeuvre frauduleuse’ de Rimini,” *Hilaire et son temps. Actes du Colloque de Poitiers ... 1968* (Paris 1969) 65, dated in the 360s. “It is difficult to know what these last two Greek words [*hypostasis* and *ousia*] meant at the time [A.D. 325]; or rather they must have meant different things to different people,” according to R. Hanson in a valuable summary discussion, “The achievement of orthodoxy in the fourth century AD,” *Making of Orthodoxy*, ed. R. Williams (Cambridge 1989) 144.

less than a dozen more were published, at odds with each other at some point or other; and at the second ecumenical council in 381 the Nicene creed itself was determined still to need amplification.

How was it that the Christian community was so continually disturbed by claims of truly correct belief—claims of orthodoxy—asserted and denied over the course of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries? And why could debate not be controlled and brought to a resolution?

1. THE EMERGENCE OF THE PROBLEM

In the first place, there were the working materials from which orthodoxy must be constructed. They were to be found in the bible. Differences existed in the choice of what to include in one holy collection; but these were not major.⁸ What the chosen books had to say, every word, had next to be fitted together and reconciled. Nothing must be left out except the begetting itself of Christ which, by a mistranslation, could be biblically declared beyond human understanding. On the other hand, there must be no importation of new, extra-biblical words. Yet in aid of the effort of explanation, in fact special words were imported into the discussion, not to be found in scripture or to be found there only in other denotations. They proved more useful than welcome. As one group protested to their emperor (who was Marcian, 450–457), they had no patience for “new-fangled terminology strange to our ears.” *Hypostasis* was suspect though *homoousios* was excepted—with occasional protest. Absent this latter term, the drift of controversy toward Arianism would have been hard to prevent. In time, another term, *homoiousios*, “similar-substance-y,” was thought necessary along with different understandings of “nature” (*physis*), “substance” (*ousia*), “substantial reality” (*hypostasis*), “individuality” (*prosopon*), and their Latin equivalents, all, as they explained the relation between the Son and the Father God. In fact, Latin lacked a large enough lexicon to provide a distinct equivalent for each of these Greek terms of debate; so the thought of the most eminent theologians of the eastern churches was never clearly understood in the west; and by the fifth century, at least in the Syrian churches, there were the limitations of Syriac also to consider, in which also precise synonyms were lacking.⁹ Today in English we confront the problem of equivalences for the ancient wording, as a few illustrations will make clear (see n. 7); but this is not the place to explore their meaning.

In the generations immediately after Nicaea, even in the face of Nicene consensus, the outcome opened up new, intractable problems; for speculation reached in every imaginable direction: for example, touching Christ’s humanity, whether taken on in the womb or only after being born, as a babe, with all the indignities implicit in birth

⁸ A list of the agreed books appears first in 367, cf. PG 26.1176f.; but some churches acknowledged other books as well; cf. C. W. Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity* (Leiden 1990) 8, 175.

⁹ Protest to Marcian by monks; E. Schwartz, *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum* (henceforth *ACO*) (Berlin 1914–1940) 2.1.3, 124ff.; or earlier, Epiphanius in his *Panarion* 72.10.4 discussing a creed of some circulation, “of which I myself don’t understand all the subtleties”; J. Meyendorff, “The Council of 381 and the primacy of Constantinople,” *La signification et l’actualité du II^e Concile œcuménique pour le monde chrétien d’aujourd’hui* (Chambésy 1982) 400. On Syriac, S. Brock, “The ‘nestorian’ church: a lamentable misnomer,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 78 (1996) 28; and S. H. Moffett, *History of Christianity in Asia*, 1: *Beginnings to 1500*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY 1998) 176.

and infancy; and there was speculation about the degree of Christ's mortality—was it entire and dominant in both will and moral nature as well as in the body and flesh? Dozens of such questions were to be posed over the course of the centuries I look at; and they attracted an equal number of schools of thought, most often given the name of whatever person first made them popular.¹⁰

There was, for a start, Arianism; also the heretical Acacians, Fotinians, Macedonians, Apollinarians, Nestorians, Eunomians, and many others held up to obsecration in imperial laws and public letters. Notice, those whose names identified some doctrine which others challenged were bishops (all but a very few—prominently, Origen, in the third century, or the archimandrite Eutyches). There was a long list of them and a rich, dark vocabulary applied to them, too; but also a list of good people whose names could be invoked in aid of one's own theological position: Athanasius, Gregory the Wonderworker, Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril (this last, cited by various antagonists against each other). New names were added as the centuries rolled on.¹¹ It was the episcopal ranks that supplied them.

A bishop by the fourth century enjoyed great freedom of action. He was of course God's representative. Because of or beyond that, in Rome as elsewhere he was supported by, or controlled, a sum equal to that of all the rest of his clergy put together, and equal also to all the monies spent in poor-relief. Then as always, money meant position and influence. In every town or city he consorted with the highest ranks of society; had his congregation in his hand, naturally, but a circle of secular friends as well whom he cultivated for their power in the community, and commonly kept up a lively correspondence linking him to his brothers and secular peers elsewhere, witness the surviving hundreds of letters of Augustine or of Basil, each, or the thousands of Severus of Antioch.¹² Society was organized in a self-protective network of obligation and protection in which any bishop naturally belonged.

To muzzle him, then, was no easy task. It was attempted in vain (*ACO* 1.1.4, 10) at Antioch by a bold presbyter who literally covered the mouth of his superior to prevent his expounding a hated theology from his throne in church; whereupon the irrepressible old man held up three fingers, first; then one. The signal amounted to a theological declaration. Or again, in the face of surrounding disagreement, "a certain bishop Dorotheus at Constantinople, holding the same views as Nestorius ..., when the Constantinopolitan church was full and Nestorius was seated there, rose up and had the boldness to call out in a loud voice, 'If any should say Mary bore God, *theotokos*, let him be accursed.' A huge uproar burst out on the spot among the whole crowd and they rushed out, for they wished to have nothing to do with such ideas" (Mansi

¹⁰ On the various points made here, see my *Voting* (n. 3 above) 36f. and elsewhere; J. Willebrands, "Le concile de Constantinople de 381 II^e oecuménique," *La signification et l'actualité* (n. 9 above) 99, "hypostasis" suspect; C. S. Konstantinidis, "Les présupposés historico-dogmatiques de l'oecuménicité du II Concile oecuménique," *ibid.* 81, on amplification of Nicaea; P. Christou, "Heresies condemned by the second ecumenical council," *ibid.* 114, four creeds at Antioch; and no less than 16 creeds published just in the generation after Nicaea, T. D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius* (Cambridge 1993) 229ff.

¹¹ See references gathered in my *Voting* (n. 3 above) 39 and nn. 46ff.; and "good" names in, for example, *ACO* 4.2, 172 (Innocentius, *On the Conference with the Severus-group* of A.D. 532); Mansi 9.183, the emperor making the roll-call in 553.

¹² E. W. Brooks, ed., *Sixth Book of the Select Letters of Severus Patriarch of Antioch in the Syriac Version*, 2: *Translation* Pt. 1 (Oxford 1903) ix.

4.1013B).

And further, as a bishop headed a population of direct dependents in proportion to the size of his town, counting his slaves, servants, and church staff numbering many hundreds in great Alexandria, so he also could expand his reach almost at will through his preaching. If like Arius he developed doctrinal views which he held to strongly and was willing to risk offense to other sees or to his metropolitan, he could appeal to a wide audience for help. He could publish open letters and tracts; he could like Arius reach down to the man in the street through eloquence not only in his church but in other public settings, and, like Ambrose and Augustine in the west but still more successfully in the east, he could set his teachings to music. Parades and demonstrations worked. Many are described, generally at night-time and by torch- or taper-light; some, with antiphonal chanting of what amounted to war-songs.

Constantine has been seen reminding both Arius and his bishop of "the dullness of mind among the people we teach." From other emperors later as from any number of bishops in their publications or in their remarks at councils, we hear how "the simple-minded" must be spared, how they must not be involved at all because they can be all too easily led astray. By which is meant, against *Us*, whether emperors themselves in capital letters, or the speaker whoever he may be. The reminder was so far ineffective that, in such street violence as we have first seen around Arius's movement, and sometimes reaching into places of worship themselves, tens of thousands of partisans were killed over the period here being described.¹³ This aspect of the search for orthodoxy needs to be mentioned later, too; but is useful here to indicate how widely and often large numbers of participants could be enlisted in the debate, in the eastern and theologically decisive half of the empire. And a great part of these deaths resulted from police efforts to enforce peace and calm!

From just about the time of Nicaea, too, a sector of the Christian population enters on the stage destined for a specially prominent role in theological struggles. These were men (and, in far smaller numbers and not at all active, women) who had given themselves to an ascetic life. They were a village and rural phenomenon; among them a low level of literacy and impatience of anything intellectual or learned, other than in scripture, made them particularly hard to deal with. The emperors as well as bishops say so, with impatience. At the same time, they were devout in a more single-minded, passionate way than most of the clergy. They brought a new level of physical engagement to clashes over doctrine; and from the mid-fourth century, too, as they increasingly entered episcopal careers, they introduced into it and its councils a new intensity of beliefs. It will be seen later what part they played in the fragmentation of eastern Christendom.

2. CONTROLLING THE PROBLEM?

To discipline belief and give it unity, a force was needed superior to dissent; and in the west, the bishop of the old capital generally enjoyed this at least on the doctrinal plane, however feeble against the armed strength of immigrant Arians. Within the see of Peter doctrinal dissent amounted to very little.

¹³ Cf. my *Voting* (n. 3 above) chap. 5.

The east was a different story, and the two obvious big factors are almost enough to explain why: first, the major churches' habits of self-rule; and second, the overwhelming presence of the emperor in the home of one of them, from which he ruled over what he and his subjects grandly called "the inhabited world," the *oikoumene*. On the estimation of these two factors, Rowan Williams supplies the best advice: "Orthodoxy is constructed in the processes of both theological and political conflict; which means that understanding it fully should involve understanding these conflicts."¹⁴

As to the first of these two factors—habits of doctrinal self-rule in which flourished a species even of democracy—for secular purposes the empire had long been divided into broad areas of administration called *dioikeses*, and within these, into more than a hundred provinces each with its capital city and governor. Accepting this two-level arrangement in the east, the Christian community subordinated its ordinary bishops to the metropolitans seated in provincial capitals. Above these in turn, for Church-historical reasons, it placed the bishops of Alexandria and Antioch, with Jerusalem for eventual promotion, while Constantinople won promotion for political reason. None of these four great churches had a right acknowledged by the others to legislate for all. Instead, they competed jealously with each other for primacy. Eastern Christendom had no equivalent to the Roman primate.

Democracy at both levels not only survived from earlier centuries but gained in importance. Not only were individual bishops all elected by congregants, but further, canons agreed on at Nicaea, in line with already established practice and confirmed in later councils, prescribed semi-annual meetings of bishops to be convened by their metropolitan. While this rule was not strictly obeyed, still, it is evident that a year seldom passed in a given province with no meeting at all. Over the period of this essay, some 2,500 can be identified by date and site.¹⁵ True, they were not likely to take up credal questions; thus the vast majority of them hardly concern the period on which I focus; but their routines were the same whatever their size or agenda.

By exception, Arius's bishop had called a council to judge and condemn him. In whatever way this was handled, it took on the general shape of a civil or criminal trial before a jury. And such was to be expected. The procedure gives prominence to a consensus within the church at once familiar and surprising: a consensus in favor of determining orthodoxy by vote. The majority should rule.

Council business was ordinarily initiated through charges or complaints against individuals, a number of which were in fact brought forward at Nicaea by bishops expecting routine procedures, only to see the emperor tear them all up, except one: he wanted no distractions from the single item of interest to him, the charge aimed at Arius. Here was doctrine wrapped up in the one man. Similarly in subsequent doctrinal debates in councils, not an idea, not a set of words, but some person or persons accused of impiously uttering them would constitute the target for discussion and adjudication. It was thus all the more natural for heresies to be given the name of whoever was condemned for them (above). Verdicts which were at the same time council

¹⁴ R. Williams, ed., *The Making of Orthodoxy. Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick* (Cambridge 1989) ix.

¹⁵ Cf. my *Voting* (n. 3 above) chap. 2.

decisions followed a voice vote which had thereafter to be confirmed in writing on the spot. Non-participant bishops who wanted to support it could add their signatures if they wished, months and months later. It was often politic to do so.

Less often, business might be initiated by the presiding officer(s). It was natural and occasionally attested that it had been reviewed before the council was opened, committed to writing in a book of proceedings, fattened with supporting documents also in the book, and thus made ready for an orderly flow of presentation, debate and decision. But decision was always by majority, and the democratic principle was so strongly supported and so completely customary that it prevailed in appeals, valid only from a less well attended council to a larger one. By the same token, a bare majority was intolerable. Extraordinary group pressure was brought to bear on a minority, just as so often happens in United States jury deliberations. Hold-outs were made to feel as uncomfortable and as threatened as possible.

It was this context that explains the words “general” or “of the whole,” *katholikos*, and “worldwide,” *oikoumenikos* (Greek terms adopted into Latin by transliteration). They could be used to stigmatize opponents as a mere fringe group, while dignifying and therefore validating one’s own; hence the freedom, not to say impudence, with which they were applied by partisans each to his own party or belief. The other could object: “anyone who brags about being ‘catholic’ is the spoiler of the church.” Yet everyone did it, or tried it.¹⁶ How else could one reach above and so terminate a disagreement? How else could one declare “right” doctrine, “orthodoxy”?

To these rhetorical questions of course there was a ready answer delivered at Nicaea and implied, eventually embodied, in the description of any issuing council as “ecumenical”: the answer was that Constantine or whoever occupied the throne had approved, summoned or stood behind it. That defined the word; for no other authority could speak to the entire Christian population; and Constantine and his successors proved very willing to do just that. We come thus to the second factor—the political -- affecting the construction of orthodoxy: the overwhelming presence of the emperor.

Constantine was quite right to term himself “bishop (*episkopos*, “over-seer”) outside the Church”; he had established his claim to pronounce on right belief through his advocacy of *homoousios* and his subsequent selling of it to doubters with explanations intended to take the corners off the term. It was then he to whom Arius appealed for release from exile, some years later, using contacts within the imperial family; for only after Constantine had spoken could a provincial council grant reinstatement into the community of worshippers. Again, it was Constantine who finally withdrew forgiveness as Arius pressed too hard for a return to his church of origin; and Constantine who decreed the destruction of Arius’s writings in public bonfires and the execution of anyone who failed to surrender copies.¹⁷

By the date of this legislation, a new bishop, Athanasius (328–373), had been ordained in Alexandria. It was Constantine to whom he soon appealed when his episcopal throne was threatened, and it was the emperor by whom he was unexpectedly sent

¹⁶ Quoted, a petition to the emperor against an incumbent bishop, A.D 384, in O. Günther, *Epistulae imperatorum pontificum aliorum* (Prague 1895–1898) 86; discussion of both terms in my *Voting* 68f.

¹⁷ Williams, *Arius* (n. 4 above) 71f., 75ff.; W. H. C. Frend, *Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia 1984) 524ff.

into exile. By this date, Constantine had of his own authority restored bishops in Egypt to their thrones who had been earlier deposed as Arian. Athanasius saw a reemergence of the heresy and, in defying the emperor on this front, appeared to threaten the peace of Nicaea—for which he was made to suffer. From his exile, another emperor, Constantine's son, was later enlisted to restore him. And so it went for decades of subsequent exiles and restorations disturbing the long patriarchate of this indomitable man. They had obvious doctrinal repercussions in Alexandria and therefore throughout Egypt—indeed throughout the east—for to support or get rid of a bishop was to do as much for his creed.

Herein lay a great truth: theology could certainly be understood by anyone in his own fashion; such liberty was a private one; and his choice of doctrine he could call “right teaching,” *orthodoxia*, if he chose; but the claim was of course meaningless unless it was acknowledged by others. At that point, what was in essence a thing of reasoning and personal belief turned into publications and people. The invisible became tangible and, so, subject to physical force. With companies of soldiers resident in every city of any size and their actual use attested in bloody incidents a hundred times over the period of my focus, and with the emperor as their commander in chief, surely he was the adjudicator.¹⁸

Among a rich choice of illustrative anecdotes to show what this might mean, consider how the doctrine taught in Ephesus was imposed through the ordaining of a so-minded bishop: the cleric who presided at that rite did it only under compulsion, so he testified, at the hands of an imperial official heading up “a whole crowd who beat me and dragged me to the church.” But the tale is just begun; for ordination required three bishops.

“I waited one, two, three days at my hotel and no other reverend bishop appeared, and finally some of the reverend clergy came and said to me: ‘There are not any other bishops here. What’s to be done?’ ‘If there are not reverend bishops here,’ I replied, ‘what can I do alone? It is contrary to strict observance of the canons for one bishop to deal with a church, especially such an important metropolis.’ While they were talking with me, the building where I was staying was surrounded by an enormous crowd, and one Holosericus—that was his name, an official of the *Comes*, I think—came in with dagger drawn and he and all the crowd carried me off to the church.”¹⁹

A local controversy must sometimes yield to armed force of this sort; sometimes its effects were obvious on entire councils. As one example, that of 359. The interventionist emperor Constantius (337–361) decided he had to bring dissension to an end with a church assembly big enough to include everyone and overwhelm all challenge. But it was too big; so it had to be split, 160 representatives from eastern sees meeting in a small city of what is now Turkey, more than 400 in its equivalent in northeast Italy (Ariminum). At the latter, some 320 disregarded the emperor's plain wishes, even though his praetorian prefect was very publicly in charge of the proceedings. He informed them, however, that they must remain in session until they came round to a better opinion. “Fed up with their absence from home, ... done in by the cold and hun-

¹⁸ References gathered in my *Voting* (n. 3 above) 58f.

¹⁹ *ACO* 2.1, 408, trans. A. H. M. Jones, *Later Roman Empire* (Oxford 1964) 917f.

ger” as the season stretched into October—frightened as well, not wanting to lose their episcopal thrones, amenities, and tax exemptions—after six months of what amounted to house arrest they all capitulated and signed what they were told; likewise, their opposite numbers among the easterners (who were far fewer). Only a handful held out and suffered exile. As Yves-Marie Duval points out, the truly heroic Athanasius “was the first to grant some justification to the plea of *force majeure* which the weak ones offered—after this force majeure had dissipated.” It is not given to all to be heroic.²⁰

And as a second example: at Ephesus (449) one council arrived at a doctrinal consensus expressed in the deposition of a bishop accused of heresy. Later, they found themselves before another council dominated by entirely different parties, and had to excuse or, rather, deny their past action in a tearful, terrified fashion:

“Nobody agreed! It was by compulsion, compulsion by blows! We signed a blank sheet! We were threatened with deposition! We were threatened with exile! Soldiers with batons and swords were ranged against us and we were scared of the batons and swords! It was in fear that we signed! Batons and swords all around, and what sort of a council? That’s why he had the soldiers!”²¹

Less obvious physical controls at the command of the emperor were also to hand: religious writings might be and often were declared heretical by law, and destroyed by the imperial agent in the province, just as we have seen Arius’; their authors or like-minded clergy might be sent into exile for any form of publicizing of religious views; public discussion of theology was repeatedly forbidden by law (for example, Sozomen, *Eccl. Hist.* 7.6.7, A.D. 388); and bishops might be deposed for non-compliance apparently by the emperor’s fiat though more often by obedient local church councils. Remarkable changes in the supremacy of one doctrine over another took place upon the death of one emperor and the accession of another, testimony to the quite decisive effect that all these imperial powers and measures could have on the orthodoxy of the moment: as in 337 with the accession of Constantius; again at his death; or at the death of Theodosius II (450), of Marcian (457) or of Anastasius (518).

Yes, all this was true. Yet it was no more than half the truth, or less; for the emperor as a believer also acknowledged the holy right of the church to determine what doctrine was divine truth. That truth must emerge through councils. Even if their composition was most often carefully controlled, even if none could claim ecumenical weight except by the emperor’s say-so, and even if no serious dispute could be controlled without this weight, nevertheless, councils remained meetings of bishops. They were not meetings of secular officialdom. They met over doctrinal controversies with a copy of the bible on display at their center. Speakers called attention to it, deponents swore upon it and, equally at the time and in pastoral publications afterwards, participants reminded their audience that in scripture was the Pneuma itself, the holy Spirit. In the decisions voted on, the Pneuma spoke.

The two forces to which Rowan Williams directs attention, theology and politics, clergy and emperor, thus existed in a tension never entirely relaxed and sometimes

²⁰ Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicon* 2.41ff. (PL 20.152Bff.), esp. 153D, 154A; Duval (n. 7 above) 55, quoted; and he points to the same explanation of conduct in Hilary’s historical fragments §8.4 (PL 10.701f.).

²¹ For the setting, see my *Voting* (n. 3 above) 88.

deeply antagonistic. Inevitably it infected everything to do with councils as well as individuals. Was a council indeed to be convened at all? If a struggle could be foreseen, surely imperial authorization would be essential. It must be sought through friends at court; the capital must be visited so as to lobby in person. Here, networks of political indebtedness came together; bribery on a handsome scale was more the rule than the exception. Ordinarily the first steps that we hear about leading to a council would be taken by some particularly influential bishop. He must persuade the emperor that it was in the latter's interests to provide the necessary backing; and individual emperors, Constantius or Theodosius II or Justinian, had their own convictions. Thought would be given by both, naturally, to the balance of episcopal support to be expected and where it could best be found. This much being determined, then size and invitations had to be considered. Within a generation of Nicaea it was clear that doctrinal allegiance was or could be a regional thing. In 359 this found expression in the splitting of a council into two, as has been seen. But within the eastern region as a whole, "Western" soon came to mean the lower Danube provinces and those of present-day western and northern Turkey. Their sees obeyed the patriarch of Constantinople. "Eastern" meant parts of southern Turkey and the Holy Land, answering to Antioch; and Egypt with its own hundred sees answered to Alexandria. Increasingly these three became compacted and voted as blocs; yet bits might be split off on occasion. Planning for a council had to take account of such loyalties in order to get the right attendance and thus insure the desired outcome.²²

Planning for engagement in the council of 343 (Serdica) could already be described by Athanasius in terms of the considerations just outlined (*History of the Arians* 15, PG 25.709B): one should have leaders trained in oratory; leverage among influential courtiers and officials, including military commanders to inspire alarm; high standing inside the church generally; and a good supply of lying witnesses. What is quite missing in Athanasius' hostile picture are any religious convictions, even though faith was to be at issue. Hostility colors his picture; it adds that element, that passion, so highly important in the mix of factors that determined action.

Athanasius was himself a man of strong feelings; so, most evidently, were the participants of the Ephesian council described above; and the proceedings of other councils, recorded stenographically, give us a hundred moments of jubilation, terror, supplication, fury, despair, every variety of storm that can sweep over a crowd; so the bishops dance about, shout (a great deal), weep, throw themselves on the floor, or exult in ways that the observer today will not dismiss as the froth of history. They show rather why people behaved as they did.

Among drives or impulses detectible behind action, due importance must be assigned to religious conviction. Most evidently. And no evidence is clearer than the willingness of the champions of one point of doctrine or another to endure much suffering for their cause. While Athanasius's may be the name most familiar, there are other heroes like Dioscorus or Iacobos (James Baradai) of equal, unconquerable courage. Beyond these are the many hundreds of the episcopal rank who, over the period

²² Bloc-planning, on an empire-wide scale; Theodoret, *Eccl. Hist.* 5.7 (PG 82.1208); for the eastern, cf. references in my *Voting* 144 n. 19, 152 n. 87.

of the first to the fifth ecumenical council, lost their sees rather than subscribe to what they did not believe. Add, too, the scores who actually lost their lives—not to mention whole armies of laity who confronted each other or the emperor in mortal encounters, again and again. In any treatment of the struggle for control over dissensions, due weight must be given to—call it—the irrational factor. It was this that could not be controlled.

3. FAILURE AND SUCCESS

There is easily detectable emotion underlying the protest of bishops at councils, when they explain their attachment to the words of the creed that they defend. Consider the fourth ecumenical at Chalcedon in 451. “We all believe this,” the participants shout en masse, at one point. Their chorus in the conventions of democracy, as then accepted, amounted to a motion passed; and they continue with more massed exclamations: “This is how we baptize and were baptized.” It was a matter of childhood, of the catechumenate and the forming of the mind and heart for a Christian life. “This is how we believe,” they continue, and repeat the chant a second time for emphasis (*ACO* 2.3.2, 106). “In this we were baptized. We baptize in this. This is what the blessed Cyril taught,” they shout at another moment (6; 2.1, 275), greeting the Nicene wording as it is recited to them from the minutes of 325.

Grass-roots belief of this intensity was slowly formed, slowly and reluctantly changed, and locally retained in preference to conformity with other communities even quite near-by. J. N. D. Kelly notes the ubiquity of this independence while at the same time putting the effect of Nicaea into perspective: Nicaea introduced “a creed for bishops” as opposed to “the old creeds for catechumens.”²³ As its bare-bones text was after generations digested into local practices, it took on that beloved familiarity attested in the shouts at Chalcedon.

And the Cyril who is quoted? “It is enough,” he says in one of his open letters, this, to a fellow-bishop of Syria, “it is enough for persons heading in this [properly ‘orthodox’] direction to confess that they curse the Messalian heresy; but anyone working with them very closely and trying to go beyond this with, perhaps, passages read to them from books, confuses a man without a clear intelligence. Most people don’t have any special knowledge and can’t think out how thoroughly to condemn what needs to be condemned” (PG 77.376Af.). What he has to say illustrates the two levels of understanding that Kelly draws attention to; and Cyril illustrates also that problem in theological debate, or more frankly, in comprehension, which was indicated in the first section, above.

For another witness on the same point, we have the Vatican theologian Martin Jugie. He devoted a book-sized study to a major doctrinal stance labeled by its detractors “Monophysitism.”²⁴ It had given rise to continuing disturbances in the church

²³ Kelly (n. 4 above) 101f., 172, 175, 194, 205 (quoted), and 255; Konstantinidis (n. 10 above) 81, “Chrysostom preaching at Antioch mentions that in his church it was customary to make an addition to the credo” [of 381] in various significant points; PG 61.348f.

²⁴ Quoted, col. 2252 in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 10 (Paris 1929), s. v. “Monophysisme-Monophysite,” with no different assessment in E. Wipszycka, “Le nationalisme a-t-il existé dans l’Egypte byzantine?” *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 22 (1992) 127: “Clearly the overwhelming majority of the Alex-

in the period post-Chalcedon, especially in Egypt. How could they be explained? “An alert historian,” Father Jugie tells us, “has no difficulty in discerning the basic causes, which can be reduced to four: (1) A national spirit and hatred of the Greeks as outsiders; (2) The Alexandrian patriarch’s overwhelming spiritual authority and his large material resources; (3) The ignorance of the clergy from top to bottom; (4) The predominance of monks, likewise totally ignorant and simply swearing on to the patriarch’s creed, while enjoying enormous influence among the devout population.”

It is a reality that is accused, here—though a reality identified by a term, “ignorance,” which we are perhaps not used to hearing. It has some of that “hostility” about it which ideological controversy will commonly arouse and of which much may be found in more recent pages than Father Jugie’s; so his own cannot be called unrepresentative.

The reality needs to be acknowledged. As both the ancient and the modern observer make clear, a great difference in minds did indeed separate the most highly educated of the church leadership from the body of the Christian population. It was idle to insist on a faith that was intellectual—ever more so—so long as the masses “thought” with their feelings. It was feelings that they insisted on when they spoke of their own, their personal baptism; it was feelings which animated the terminology of difference then defining the Coptic church, the “Monophysite,” against the “Melkite” or “Royal” (imperial) as the Egyptian natives called it; and those feelings could only be exacerbated by imperial attempts to control belief—that is, to impose belief at the sword’s point.

Such was the emperor’s policy in the wake of Chalcedon. Alexandria was given its bishop Proterius by force. He was seen as a traitor to his own church; whereas the patriarch Dioscorus, successor to Cyril, deposed at Chalcedon, sent into exile, was seen as a holy martyr. Before long the streets rang with the shout, “Let the bones of Proterius be burnt! Drive Judas into exile! Cast Judas out!”²⁵ In his place, another imperial appointee; and then another. In time the great majority of the devout, insisting on Christ’s single nature, a perfect joining of the kingly and the suffering, won free. A Coptic Orthodox Church had emerged.

What emerged as well, even by the moment when this new creation first began to take shape in 451, was the inability of the secular power to impose by force, or fabricate by art and compromise, or in persuasive terms truly to achieve unity of belief. Councils indeed could be controlled. The various necessary ways and means had been gradually mastered. They have been described. From about that point on, dissent might disturb them—but without physical violence. Or councils were more often very civil, even servile in the face of some high government official who presided. But making their decisions stick among the populace at large was another matter.

andrian population and many of the lower clergy as well—as much as most Copts in the countryside—must have been quite untouched (“insensibles”) by the niceties of the learned Christianity of the theologians.” Wipszycka demolishes the notion of nationalism in Egypt (that is, Copt versus Greek) but grants hatred in the province against Constantinople (83) contrasted with prideful patriotism (90ff., 97); for the emperor’s appointment of an ex-soldier with full powers over the provincial armies as Alexandrian patriarch (Apollinarius, 551–570), and the resulting massacres, see Pietri (n. 2 above) 408, 476, 530.

²⁵ W. H. C. Frend, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement* (Cambridge 1972) 154; Evagrius, *Eccl. Hist.* 2.8; Davis (n. 4 above) 83f.: “what emerged from the Council of Chalcedon was ... a formal shift in the relationship between the church in Egypt and ... Rome and Constantinople.”

It could not be done in Egypt, though failure was a long time in appearing. It could not be done, either, in the adjoining area of the modern Near East nor in the empire's more remote provinces as far as and into Mesopotamia. The first council of Ephesus (431) was decisive. Its condemnation of Constantinople's patriarch, Nestorius (428–431), dearly wished for by Cyril his rival in Alexandria, glorified the victim, who was for centuries afterwards venerated as such.²⁶ His supporters were hounded out of their sees in the 430s, they huddled down in Osrhoene province in the city of Edessa; they were driven from there in 489, and took refuge at last in Nisibis in Persia. By that date they had long declared their independence from their patriarch in Antioch; they rather acknowledged their own titular chief, their *katholikos*, and were convening their own councils; and Justinian's further insistence that their most revered theologian should be anathematized (553) completed the break. Thus they too developed the structure of an independent East Syrian Church which sprawled across a part of the empire and its eastern neighbor. It is often mis-called the "Nestorian."²⁷

A third break-away church, the Syrian Orthodox or Jacobite,²⁸ after a drawn-out separation from the imperial, pro-Chalcedon position, found its name and founder in Jacobos, ordained clandestinely to the see nominally of Edessa (542). He in turn, and ever one step ahead of the emperor's angry reach, ordained a huge number of clergy to minister among his converts to a more Monophysite faith throughout what had been the diocese of Antioch. Among his ordinations was a dissident bishop even in Antioch, Sergius from 557/8.

The two eastern allegiances settled down to live together, sharing Antioch and a great many other cities in what is now southern Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Israel. Adding Egypt, in all these areas the adherents to Chalcedon and "Rome" also were represented, well past the end of the period of my focus. They were in universal agreement on one point: that Nicaea's creed was a true faith. It was safe for the emperor Zeno on 28 July 482, in his great "Unifier," his *Henotikon*, to proclaim that "both We and the churches everywhere neither have held, nor hold, nor shall hold, nor do we know those who hold a different creed or teaching or definition of faith or faith except the aforesaid holy creed of the 318 holy Fathers (of Nicaea)." Similar, sometimes quite passionate mass professions of loyalty to Nicaea break out in various ecumenical councils.²⁹ So orthodoxy had been constructed. No one could deny it.

²⁶ H. Chadwick, *Church in Ancient Society* (Oxford 2001) 543.

²⁷ Theologian of Nestorianism Theodore of Mopsuestia condemned; cf. R. Devreesse, *Le patriarcat d'Antioche* (Paris 1945) 75; S. Gero, *Barsauma of Nisibis* (Louvain 1981) 24; and on refuge in Persia, Moffett (n. 9 above) 200ff.; Roberson (n. 4 above) 1f.

²⁸ A. van Roey, "Les débuts de l'Eglise jacobite," *Das Konzil von Chalkedon*, ed. A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht (Würzburg 1953) 2.345ff., 349f., on the split, more or less anti-Chalcedon, in Syria under the emperor Anastasius and persecution by Justin, esp. of Severus of Antioch (bishop 512–518, whose disciple, as he may be called, was Jacobus); renewed by Justinian 535/6 (354ff.); P. T. R. Gray, *Defense of Chalcedon in the East* (Leiden 1979) 47; "for this entire world [of the East], Constantinople no longer counted at all [post-543]; rather, any ties to the Empire were detestable ... The Greeks and their empire are the enemy" (Devreesse [n. 27 above] 96); and Pietri (n. 1 above) 458ff.

²⁹ The *Henotikon*, quoted in *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus*, trans. M. Whitby (Liverpool 2000) 148 (bk. 2.14); invoked by Marcian in a similar plea for unity; see my *Voting* (n. 3 above) 32, 75, 91, 93, 103, 118. Evagrius (Whitby 211), a universal (Syrian, Egyptian, and imperial) confession of the Nicene creed by the 530s (*Eccl. Hist.* 4.11). The East Syrians affirm Nicaea in 410; Gero (n. 27 above) 23; and S. Brock, "The christology of the Church of the East," *Traditions and Heritage of the Chris-*

A question by afterthought may be asked: whether or how much the struggles of so many generations, carried on at the highest levels of secular and ecclesiastical power, had registered among the masses of the faithful. In the terms suggested by J. N. D. Kelly, the struggle had been over “a creed for bishops.” Did it affect “the old creeds for catechumens”? There is no clear indication that it did. In every church, lists of venerated names—local bishops of the past as well as great teachers of the church—were on display and joined to the conduct of the Mass. They were the “diptychs.” The teachers were such as were approved by the local bishop’s authority, though the congregation could request a name to be added or deleted.³⁰ Here for all to see and hear recited was, or were, the definition of orthodoxy, but in the form of names, not a text. The text of belief was made known in other settings of more meaning—and more success.

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tian East. Proceedings of the International Conference (Moscow 1996) 161.

³⁰ Diptychs often attested as the place where doctrinal controversy ended: a focus of Justinian’s urgent interest, Mansi 8.1064A, called for by acclamation at a council; 9.214, 274B, 279; in papal correspondence, e.g., of Hormisdas, PL 63.434Cf.; C. Sotinel, “Le concile, l’empereur, l’évêque,” *Orthodoxie, christianisme, histoire*, ed. S. Elm et al. (Rome 2000) 279; and demanded by congregations in Constantinople A.D. 518; Roey (n. 2 above) 349.